

Governor's Proposed FY23 Budget Adjustments
Appropriations Hearing
HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Thursday, February 24th, 2022

Rudy Zimmermann
Board Member
Columbus House Inc

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan, Representative Nolan, Senator Miner, Representative France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023. I am here to discuss the important investments through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to support efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut. My name is Rudy Zimmermann and I volunteer in New haven and am a resident of Orange CT.

I am a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut and a retired Director of Engineering with expertise in facilities and project management. We, alongside many other partners in the state, know that safe, affordable, and permanent housing is the only solution to homelessness. When our state's residents have stable housing, their economic and health outcomes improve. During COVID-19, the need for permanent housing for all of Connecticut's residents was made even more important.

I respectfully request that the committee support the following proposals and expansions from the Governor's budget for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS):

- I support the preservation of DMHAS' Housing Supports and Services line at \$23.404 million;
- support the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance long term plan to restore at least \$461 million to community nonprofits, which includes housing and homeless service organizations funded by DMHAS;
I support an additional \$13.34 million in FY 23 (*including \$5.26 million increase in DMHAS' Housing Supports and Services line, and \$8.08 million at DOH*) to provide homeless and housing service organizations funding for adequate wages, benefits, and professional development for front line workers, increasing rent and utility costs, and better access to technology;
- I support the Governor's proposed use of \$2.8 million of ARPA (\$1.1m FY23; \$1.1m FY24; \$562,000 FY25) for wrap-around services for 150 units of supportive housing. Supportive services are an **ongoing need and require a permanent investment**, and as such we are asking Appropriations to **support an increase** in DMHAS' Housing Supports and Services line of \$2.25 million in FY23 to expand supportive services to 300 scattered site and development units for highly vulnerable individuals and families with persistent obstacles to maintaining housing stability

Homelessness is solvable. Connecticut can make homelessness a rare, brief and one-time experience by investing in what works: housing, supportive services, and the people and infrastructure that support our most vulnerable residents. It has been proven in every state, city and county that providing housing

is the first step in ending homelessness. Additionally, we can provide dignity and self-esteem to those less fortunate. Please support the efforts of Columbus House who have, for almost 40 years, been providing shelter and support services to those less fortunate.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony, and for your hard work making important and life-saving decisions for our less fortunate Connecticut residents. It is with your support that we can help make sure everyone is healthy and stably housed.

Sincerely,
Rudy Zimmermann
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